

## PrEP services in Italy: how many people access them and what kind of services are offered?

Corbelli GM1, Badia L2, Barchi E3, Bonvicini F3, Caselli F4, Celesia BM5, Cernuschi M6, Cingolani A7, Cordioli M8, Cuomo G9, Dal Conte I10, De Carli G11, Degli Antoni A12, Di Lorenzo F13, Errico M14, Fusco FM15, Mattioli S1, Mazzotta V11, Muscatello A16, Nozza S17, Prestileo T13, Raimondi A10, Rossotti R18, Ruggieri A19, Sighinolfi L20, Stingone C21, Venturelli S22, Puro V11.

- 1 Plus onlus/BLQ Checkpoint, Bologna
- 2 Policlinico S. Orsola-Malpighi - Ambulatorio PrEP Bologna
- 3 Arcispedale Santa Maria Nuova - Spazio Sessualità salute, Reggio Emilia,
- 4 Ospedale Infermi - UO Malattie Infettive, Rimini
- 5 Università di Catania ARNAS Garibaldi - UOC Malattie Infettive, Catania
- 6 Asa/Checkpoint Milano
- 7 Fondazione Policlinico "A. Gemelli", IRCCS Roma
- 8 AOUI Ospedale Policlinico "G.B. Rossi" - UOC Malattie Infettive e Tropicali, Verona
- 9 Policlinico di Modena - Malattie Infettive - ambulatorio PrEP, Modena
- 10 Ospedale Amedeo di Savoia - Ambulatorio IST, Torino
- 11 INMI L. Spallanzani - Ambulatorio PrEP, Roma
- 12 U.O.Malattie Infettive Azienda Ospedaliero-Universitaria - Ambulatorio PrEP, Parma
- 13 A.R.N.A.S. Ospedale Civico - Malattie Infettive, Palermo
- 14 Network Persone Sieropositive, Milano
- 15 Ospedale Santa Maria Annunziata - SOC Malattie infettive, Bagno a Ripoli,
- 16 Fondazione IRCCS Ca' Granda - Osp. Maggiore Policlinico - Ambulatorio di Malattie Infettive, Milano
- 17 Ospedale San Raffaele - Dipartimento di Malattie Infettive, Milano
- 18 Ospedale Niguarda - SC Malattie Infettive, Milano
- 19 Ospedale "Guglielmo da Saliceto" - UOC Malattie Infettive, Piacenza
- 20 Azienda Ospedaliero-Universitaria - U.O. Malattie Infettive, Ferrara
- 21 Policlinico di Tor Vergata - Ambulatorio di Malattie Infettive, Roma
- 22 Ospedale di Bergamo – Ambulatorio PrEP

**Background:** Since March 2017, some clinical centres established specific services for pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) users, but no official registry or monitoring has been adopted by national or local health authorities.

**Material and methods:** Plus, Italian network of LGBT living with HIV, disseminates information about how to access PrEP through a Facebook group<sup>1</sup> and the website [www.prepinfo.it](http://www.prepinfo.it) providing a list of the centres offering services for PrEP users<sup>2</sup>. A brief survey was proposed to these centres, including 2 additional centres not enlisted, regarding the number of PrEP users they served and basic information about the service itself.

**Results:** A total of 22 centres were included in the survey, 20 of which included in <http://www.prepinfo.it/chi-ti-segue/> (see table 1): 16 are located in the North, 3 in Rome, 1 in Naples and 2 in Sicily. The first centre started offering services for PrEP users in March 2017, the most recent ones in March 2019. In this period, PrEP was started in 531 users who accessed the centres, all reporting sexual exposure: the vast majority (98%) were male, mostly (98%) men who

<sup>1</sup> Facebook closed group PrEP in Italia: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/prepinitalia/> Accessed March 2019

<sup>2</sup> Page "Chi ti segue": <http://www.prepinfo.it/chi-ti-segue/> Accessed March 2019

have sex with men (MSM); 4 women and 6 transgender persons also accessed the services. Overall, 32 users (4%) stopped PrEP, only 4 of whom for side effects. Nine services (41%) provide users with a prescription within 7 days since the first visit, in 5 centres (24%) it takes 21-28 days, while in one centre it takes more than one month. In 15 centres (68%), prescriptions are provided for one month at the first visit and then every 3 months; in 6 centres (27%) a 3-month prescription is provided since the first visit. In 9 centres (43%), no ticket is due for follow-up tests (most of them using P01 as exemption code), while in all the others, users have to pay at least for some tests. All centres reported that their users buy the drug predominantly in local pharmacies.

**Conclusions:** This is to our knowledge the first attempt to monitor access to PrEP in Italy. Access seems to be still very difficult in large areas of our country, especially in Southern regions. Not unexpectedly, access concerns almost exclusively MSM, perhaps because PrEP recommendations are mainly focused on high risk MSM and information is disseminated mostly by gay organisations. PrEP discontinuation seems limited to a small proportion of users. Characteristics of services vary significantly. A national strategy for PrEP implementation would facilitate equal access in all Regions and could eventually translate into an epidemiological impact on the HIV epidemic in Italy. A more systematic data collection is needed in order to understand demographic and behavioural characteristics of users, as well as clinical outcomes in terms of diagnosis of sexually transmitted infections and tolerability.

Table 1 – List of centres and date when the PrEP service was started

City	Centre	Date starting service
<b>Milano</b>	Ospedale San Raffaele - Dipartimento di Malattie Infettive	March 2017
<b>Milano</b>	Asa/Checkpoint Milano	June 2017
<b>Torino</b>	Ospedale Amedeo di Savoia - Ambulatorio Infezioni Sessualmente Trasmesse	December 2017
<b>Verona</b>	AOU Verona Ospedale Policlinico "G.B. Rossi" - UOC Malattie Infettive e Tropicali	December 2017
<b>Bologna</b>	BLQ Checkpoint	March 2018
<b>Roma</b>	INMI L. Spallanzani - Ambulatorio PrEP	March 2018
<b>Milano</b>	Ospedale Niguarda - SC Malattie Infettive	April 2018
<b>Bergamo</b>	Ospedale di Bergamo – Ambulatorio PrEP	June 2018
<b>Parma</b>	U.O. Malattie Infettive Azienda Ospedaliero-Universitaria Parma - Ambulatorio PrEP	June 2018
<b>Piacenza</b>	Ospedale "San Guglielmo da Saliceto" - UOC Malattie Infettive	June 2018
<b>Ferrara</b>	Azienda Ospedaliero-Universitaria - U.O. Malattie Infettive	July 2018
<b>Modena</b>	Policlinico di Modena - Malattie Infettive - ambulatorio PrEP	August 2018
<b>Roma</b>	Policlinico di Tor Vergata - Ambulatorio di Malattie Infettive	September 2018
<b>Catania*</b>	Università di Catania ARNAS Garibaldi - UOC Malattie Infettive*	September 2018
<b>Roma</b>	Fondazione Policlinico "A. Gemelli", IRCCS	November 2018
<b>Firenze</b>	Ospedale Santa Maria Annunziata - SOC Malattie infettive, Bagno a Ripoli	December 2018
<b>Rimini</b>	Ospedale Infermi - UO Malattie Infettive	December 2018
<b>Reggio Emilia</b>	Arcispedale Santa Maria Nuova - Spazio Sessualità salute	December 2018
<b>Milano</b>	Fondazione IRCCS Ca' Granda - Osp. Maggiore Policlinico di Milano - Ambulatorio di Malattie Infettive	December 2018
<b>Palermo*</b>	A.R.N.A.S. Ospedale Civico Palermo - Malattie Infettive*	January 2019

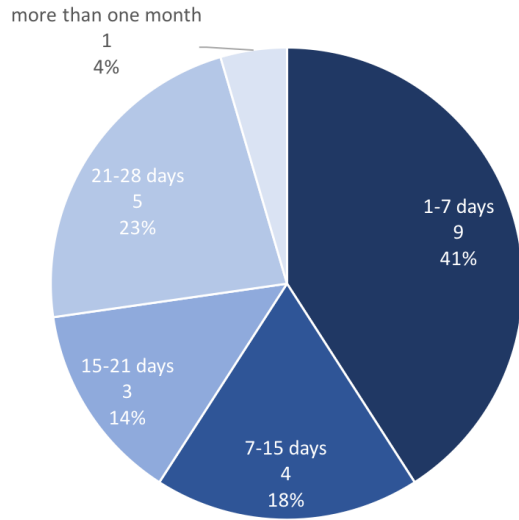
<b>Bologna</b>	Policlinico S. Orsola-Malpighi - Ambulatorio PrEP	January 2019
<b>Napoli</b>	Azienda Dei Colli - osp. Cotugno	March 2019

\* not listed on <http://www.prepinfo.it/chi-ti-segue/>

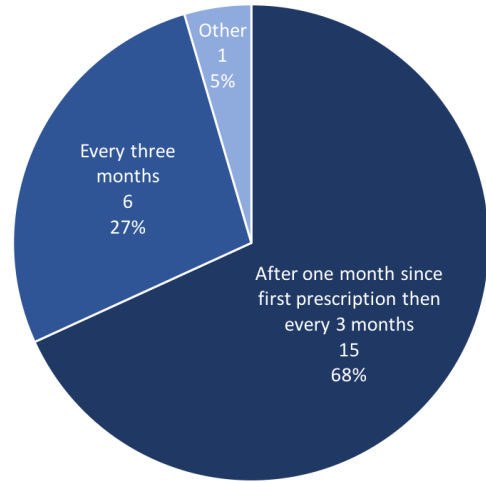
Table 2 – Number of users by gender and HIV risk

<b>Users</b>		<b>N (%)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	520 (98%)
	<b>Female</b>	4 (1%)
	<b>Trans MtF</b>	5 (1%)
	<b>Trans FtM</b>	1 (0%)
	<b>Other</b>	1 (0%)
<b>Risk</b>	<b>MSM</b>	484 (98%)
	<b>MSF</b>	7 (1%)
	<b>FSM</b>	4 (1%)
	<b>IDU</b>	0 (0%)
MtF: Male to Female; FtM: female to Male; MSM: Men who have Sex with Men; MSF: Men who have Sex with Female; FSM: Female who have Sex with Men; IDU: Injecting Drug Users		

How long does it take on average from the first access to first prescription?



Prescription schedule



Is a co-payment due?

